



May 19, 2014

Phil Pavlov, Education Committee Chairman
P.O. Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

CC: Rep. Margaret O'Brien, Rep. Adam Zemke

Re: Support of House Bills 5223 and 5224

StudentsFirst recognizes the importance of great educators. For this reason we support House Bill 5223 and House Bill 5224 introduced by Representative O'Brien and Representative Zemke, which passed through the Michigan House with overwhelming bipartisan support at 95 and 96 supporting votes each, respectively. Both bills seek to ensure Michigan students benefit from a highly effective teacher in every classroom and a strong principal leading every school. As drafted, the legislation will ensure Michigan districts implement meaningful teacher and administrator evaluations to the clear benefit of students.

House Bill 5223 improves current law by adding important measures of effectiveness, such as parent and student feedback. When constructed well, student surveys are a strong barometer of effectiveness. House Bill 5224 also builds on existing law by requiring principal evaluations to include the ability to manage and develop staff. This component is critical to improving school culture and student learning.

The Michigan Legislature could strengthen these bills even further by strengthening the objective measures of student growth. Studies show that the most effective evaluations are those that include student growth and assessment data as 33-50% of the total evaluation. In each of these bills, this component only comprises 20% of the evaluation. While other measures of student learning are also included, these factors are often subjective and can lead to a less-accurate picture of educator effectiveness. Instead, the objective measures of growth data should be the primary measure of effectiveness in both evaluation systems.

Additionally, HB 5223 prevents students from being taught by ineffective teachers two years in a row. Research shows that just one year with an ineffective teacher can lead to a loss of up to three and a half months of learning. With two consecutive ineffective teachers, students could be too far behind to ever catch up to their peers. Changing this policy is pivotal to ensuring Michigan students continue to progress year after year.

Education groups across Michigan, including Teachers, Administrators, Superintendents, School Boards, the Education Reform Community, and Business, agree great educators are paramount to every successful school. The Michigan Legislature has taken meaningful steps in recent years to ensure every student receives a high-quality education, but it is time to finish what we've started. Michigan districts need to begin implementing the kinds of changes that will dramatically improve education. Other states that have implemented bold reforms have seen success. We cannot afford to delay implementation of current state law any longer. StudentsFirst, along with a diverse group of education partners, strongly supports full implementation of statewide teacher and administrator evaluations. Educators deserve meaningful feedback on the critical nature of their work, and students need state leaders to take action so they have the best chance at success.

Thank you for your consideration of HB 5223 and HB 5224, as well as policies that would further strengthen both bills.